

A 6-Minute Difference

Ever wonder how much faster (or slower) you'd run if you were the opposite sex? Janet Furman Bowman may be the only runner in America who knows.

by: **Cynthia Gorney**

Before the race, in her warmups, Janet Furman Bowman is noticeable from across the parking lot only because she's the tallest woman, and the best dressed. Her pants are black and stretchy and look good on her. The jacket matches. Her blond hair is pulled back in a ponytail. She's wearing small dangly earrings, red lipstick, and a silver pendant on a slender chain. Her socks are rainbow-striped around the ankles.

Is there anyone here who doesn't know? Janet looks around, surveys the gathering runners, smiles. George has arrived, and Hans, and Dave, who's going to do the 5-K pushing his two-year-old in a stroller. The sky is overcast. Mount Tamalpais, the great woods-covered peak visible from almost anywhere in the eastern half of Marin County, California, looms out beyond the high

school driveway where volunteers are collecting entrance fees and marking out the starting line. Men and women trot by, loosening up. Nobody looks at Janet curiously any more—no sliding sideways glances, no startled double takes.



This is now Janet Furman Bowman on a trail at Mt. Tamalpais, near her home in Marin County, California.

Photography by Dan Winters

Morning, Janet.

Hey, Janet.

"Here I am," she says.

"Running. With a hundred friends."

She makes it sound like a simple thing.

At 8:45, 15 minutes before race time, she takes off her warmups. She's wearing black shorts and a red cross-back tank top, the same color as her ponytail holder. Janet is lean and long-limbed, like a pole-vaulter, and as she stands in the pack at the starting line, she tips her body forward slightly and tenses up. A whistle blows. For a minute Janet vanishes within the surge of runners angling for position, and then the pack begins to separate: one lap around the parking lot, they've been instructed, and then out across the grass to the trail outside the high school. By the end of the parking lot lap, Janet is in her stride, body upright, both hands closed into fists. The men are already pulling away—not all the men, but a good-sized swarm of them, Hans and George and the teenager Jason and even Dave, with the stroller.

This is the part she hates.

She can't help it. She just does. There is so much to be grateful for, after all that has happened; extraordinary graces, she revisits them every day. But when Janet sprints across the finish line? *Pull it in, Janet! Way to go, Janet!*—and checks her watch for her time, 23:27, she knows instantly how it compares to her PR for the 5-K: six minutes, 25 seconds slower, or more than two minutes per mile. She used to be able to run 5:30s. Now she can't. She trains, she pushes herself, she uses everything she has; it doesn't matter. On the weekend-morning group runs, when serious Marin runners gather near trailheads to pace each other up the dirt roads that climb Tamalpais, Janet starts with the

pack, as she has nearly every Saturday and Sunday for 25 years. "Usually there are a lot of guys," she says. "They start slow. I stay with them for the first mile. Then I start falling away. They're chatting. They don't even notice."

When she was Jim Furman, a 5'11", 148-pound middle-aged man in excellent physical shape, she kept up.

As Janet Furman Bowman, a 5'11", 148-pound middle-aged woman in excellent physical shape, she's too slow.

That, to her astonishment and irritation and unceasing soft regret, is the permanent price she has paid.

JIM FURMAN HAD RUN A 5:05 MILE AND A 3:01 MARATHON. HE WAS A DOWNHILL SKIER, HIS BUSINESS WAS A SUCCESS, HE PLAYED IN A ROCK BAND. HIS FRIENDS THOUGHT HE WAS A TERRIFIC GUY.



Jim Furman, a onetime president of the Tamalpa Runners Club, clocked 1:02:57 at the 7-mile Dipsea trail race in 1995.

Photograph courtesy of Janet Furman Bowman

MARIN COUNTY IS a famously unconstrained part of Northern California, made fun of on occasion for its receptiveness to every form of spiritual and behavioral experimentation. (From San Francisco, the shortest route to Marin requires driving across the Golden Gate Bridge and into a tunnel entrance framed by a massive painted rainbow.) But six years ago, when only a few

people in the Tamalpa Runners Club understood what was happening to Jim Furman, the bewilderment and discomfort were palpable every time the runners convened for a race or a party or a Sunday-morning trail run. The club has more than 800 active members, and its gatherings are central to one strand of social life in the affluent towns around Mount Tam, as the mountain is affectionately called. The biggest running event in the county, the brutal up-and-over-Mount Tam seven-mile June trail race called the Dipsea, highlights the season for some of the area's best competitors; spring in Marin is prep time for the Dipsea, and at the big roadside Dipsea Cafe framed photographs of past years' winners line the walls.

Jim Furman had been one of the club's organizational stalwarts since the early 1980s, when he joined the Tamalpa Runners as a young New Yorker newly settled in Marin. He had been club president, had edited the newsletter, had run the Dipsea and scores of other local races every year for more than two decades. "President for Life, that's what we called him," says Eve Pell, a writer and Tamalpa member who became one of Jim's good friends. "He was re-elected every year. He was this shy, slightly hesitant, very smart guy, who I knew, oddly enough, had been a roadie with the Grateful Dead."

The Grateful Dead story was true—Jim had grown up in Manhattan and Long Island, trained as an electrical engineer, and after a stint as a traveling rock-concert recording specialist, had founded a successful Marin County company that made audio products. Most of his friends were Marin runners, and they knew Jim Furman as a quiet, diplomatic, impressively well-read man with a bumpy if unexceptional personal history: two marriages, two divorces. One son, from a third relationship, who lived out of town, but whom Jim was helping support and would see three or four times a year. Girlfriends, sometimes serious, sometimes not. "We'd talk running, girls, politics, history," recalls George Frazier, a business consultant who was Jim's best friend and regular running partner. "You know—what each of us is

reading. Jim would always have these stacks of books on science and math and the universe and music. I knew nothing about these things. So it was a way to sponge it all up without having to read about it in the first place."

They ran together every weekend with their Tamalpa friends, on the Mount Tam trails or the paved roads at the mountain's base. The group runs were fast and hard—eight to 15 miles, weather no deterrent, the pace at the head of the pack quickening to 6:30 or faster when somebody decided to push it. "People would, in my parlance, 'bop heads,'" Frazier says. "You know. Somebody would just say: 'Let's go.' It's as natural as a bunch of thoroughbreds in a field, racing with each other."

It was not a men-only clique, the cluster of head-boppers out in front, but only a handful of the toughest Marin women, including a couple of national record holders, were able to match pace when the men were really moving. More cart ponies than thoroughbreds, Frazier would say in self-deprecation, as the hotshots in their thirties turned forty and kept running, but their competition stayed jovial and strong. Jim Furman was never the fastest, but his intensity and tenacity kept him respectably high in the regional standings. By the mid-1990s he had run a 5:05 mile and a 3:01 marathon; he'd done many ultras, too, finishing one 50-mile race in under eight hours. He had short curly hair that flared out in a wild corona around his temples when he was running, and a beloved collection of faded race T-shirts. At one point he had a good-looking dark beard. He was a downhill skier. He gave elaborate parties, where everybody came in black tie and had a wild time. His business was a big success. He played bass in a rock band.

George Frazier thought he was a terrific guy.

"I never noticed *anything*," Frazier says.

So one afternoon in 1996 Frazier stopped by Jim's house, which was up on a wild, steep hillside, with a long view of the wooded trails out back. Jim's Jeep was in the driveway, which Frazier knew meant he must be home. Frazier hadn't phoned to say he was coming, but he knocked on the door and called Jim's name. Nobody answered. Frazier banged on the door harder. Finally he started yelling. "Furman! Hey! You in there?"

Inside the kitchen, Jim Furman, who was wearing women's blue jeans, a women's tank top, and a bra, stood for a long time without moving, and listened to Frazier yell.

SHE KNEW, JANET SAYS NOW, when she was five years old. She was a boy then, but something was wrong about that. "The idea was there," she says. "At that young age, I wasn't sure exactly what it meant. I didn't necessarily want to play with dolls—but I was drawn to what my sister was. And I don't really know why. That's the essential mystery. I was intrigued by it. And I did know that I wasn't supposed to be too interested. I remember that as a teenager, my sister subscribed to *Seventeen* magazine, and my mother *McCall's*, or something like that. I remember staying up late and thumbing through those magazines like they were forbidden fruit. I was just trying to fantasize about being female. I didn't really know what I was looking for—I just had the sense that was a terrible secret, that I couldn't let anybody know I was interested in this. I had to look at those magazines after everybody went to bed."

There are men, both gay and straight, who like wearing women's clothes sometimes and nonetheless have no interest in changing gender permanently. But Jim knew into adulthood that although the anguished secret of his childhood was his furtive forays into his sister's clothes and makeup, he didn't really want to be a cross-dresser. He wanted to be a woman. He had no question about his sexual orientation; he was physically attracted to women, and because he worked so fervently and for so many years to repress the conviction that he was supposed to be one,

Jim made it to his late forties persuaded that he had tucked his identity problem off into the most private corners of an otherwise satisfying life. No one knew he kept a collection of women's clothing in a suitcase at the back of his closet. No one knew the clothes were the reason he sometimes stayed home alone in the evenings, in the house on the hillside, where no windows were visible from the street. No one knew that the first time Jim ever tried out an Internet search engine, the word he typed in was *transsexual*.

"And what came back was just a flood of information," Janet says. "Which I just devoured."

WOULD IT BE LEGITIMATE TO COMPETE IN THE WOMEN'S DIVISION ONCE HER TRANSITION WAS COMPLETE?

In the gratifying anonymity of the Internet, Jim—for there was no Janet yet—began his serious introduction to gender dysphoria, which is the diagnostic name for the psychological distress caused by the conviction that one's gender is not what the rest of the world is seeing. The more he learned about it, the clearer it became to Jim that he had found a way to understand himself, and in e-mails he disclosed things he had never said to anyone. Strangers wrote back, with encouragement and stories of their own. He sought out a therapist. He commenced a romance with a woman named Heidi McGuire, a Tamalpa runner he knew, and after a while McGuire's gentle open-mindedness made Jim think it might be all right to start telling her, and



Photography by Dan Winters

McGuire was bewildered but compassionate ("I took it as a big compliment that he trusted me enough to confide something so huge," McGuire says now), and she helped him throw a Halloween party, which Jim hosted in full drag. Janet, remembering: "There was another guy in drag. But he looked like a caricature woman. He had balloons. And they got popped before long. He had a silly fright wig. I had this \$200 wig, and this nice cocktail dress, perfectly accessorized, and shoes that fit, and professionally applied makeup. They were all knocked out by how I looked. I was eating it up. I told everybody I was Jamie. And the only thing wrong with that evening was that it ended."

Jim saw that he was going to have to do this now, not as a flamboyant party guy in Halloween costume, but outside, seriously, among people who wouldn't assume he was joking. The first time he tried, wearing the clothing, all he did was sit behind the steering wheel of his car, unable to make himself turn on the engine and back out of the garage.

The second time, he drove onto the street and down into town. But he kept the windows rolled up, and never got out of the car.

Once he went out at midnight, in a mail-order dress and a women's overcoat and women's sensible shoes, and drove a couple of towns away, where there's a street that curves alongside San Francisco Bay. He walked up and down the deserted waterfront, in the darkness, and drove home.

Finally, Jim found a local transgender support group, in San Francisco. They met in the back of a restaurant. On his initial visit the restaurant host took one look at Jim and said, "The people you want are back there," but when Jim saw them he was startled; they were big, but they looked like women, and they said hello and made room right away, and the person who had been Jim Furman sat down and introduced herself: Janet. "When I was leaving for that evening, I had said, 'I need a name.' Heidi

said: 'Jamie?' But I said, 'No. That's too ambiguous. I need something definite.'"

And for a while, after that, it was as though the house on the hillside contained congenial roommates on opposite shifts. Every morning Jim Furman, the Tamalpas runner and business entrepreneur, got into his black Jeep Grand Cherokee with EQALIZR vanity plates and drove to the office, or races, or trail workouts. Janet Furman Bowman—the new surname was invented, a cross between the last names of Jim's parents—went out at night, headed for San Francisco, driving a lilac Taurus that was otherwise kept out of sight inside the garage. The only person who had been formally introduced to both of them, besides the therapist, was Heidi McGuire. When the electrolysis started, Jim leaning back in a salon chair week after week while each hair of his beard was individually and painfully zapped off, he told the electrolysisist. But George Frazier still didn't know, and after a few months the person who was legally James Furman, which was to say Jim some of the time and Janet the rest of the time, could see that it was less like housemates and more like a bad spy novel in which some disastrous collision loomed. By the afternoon of the 1996 door-pounding incident, the transformation from Jim to Janet and back again was practiced enough that no elaborate effort with clothing or makeup was necessarily involved—but the passage was still too daunting to manage with the best guy friend standing outside the house and shouting for Jim. "I couldn't switch gears in a flash," Janet says. "It wasn't like stepping into a phone booth."

In the therapy sessions, the Jim/Janet therapist listened as her patient, who was after all a practical businessperson and a disciplined runner, began inventorying the consequences of the hormonal and surgical treatments that would eventually make Jim Furman disappear. "I made a list of all the wreckage that would happen in my life," Janet says. "The people around me. My work. But even more than that, what I really wanted to know was: Could I pull it off? Could I be a woman, and be accepted as

a woman? I didn't want to be a guy in a dress, and have people turn around and stare at me. I'd had enough of that in San Francisco. I didn't want to have a life being fodder for tourists to sneer at. I wanted to be accepted. To be happy."

At last, after several failed-nerve false starts and then a *stay there I'm coming over right now I have something to say to you* telephone call, Jim told Frazier. Frazier did not take it well.

Let me make sure I understand this, Frazier said—this other persona, this Janet you're talking about, she means you have to get rid of Jim? Why? Why can't you just keep going to San Francisco in a dress? "I tried every argument I could think of," Frazier says. "None of them made much sense. I had a loyalty to Jim that I had a difficult time letting go of." For a while Frazier went around feeling distraught and sad, tangled up in a weird kind of anticipatory grief, until a gay friend in whom he had confided sat him down and told him to stop feeling sorry for himself. "He said, 'By the time you have heard about Janet, Jim is dead,'" Frazier says. "He said: 'You cannot undo this. This is done. Janet has won. And Jim is gone. Get right with Janet.'"

HE RUNS, SHE RUNS

Distance	Jim's PR's	Janet's PR's
1 mile	5:05	6:55
5-K	17:42	22:43
8-K	29:17	38:28
10-K	36:27	48:07

TIMES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SEX DIVIDE

Janet keeps two columns of PRs—one for Jim and one for Janet. She recently turned 58, and her times for her age group are good. In fact, according to the World Association of Veteran Athletes' age-grading tables, her standards haven't changed. As a (younger) man she ran at 75 percent of her age group. As a woman she does, too.

The hormonal treatments started. George Frazier, like Heidi McGuire, and Eve Pell, and the handful of other close friends Jim Furman had decided to tell, began working to get right with

Janet. Neither Janet nor Jim—or what was left of him—made it easy for them at first. The friends were sworn to secrecy, and because the runner who showed up at Tamalpas events was still Jim Furman, Frazier found himself improvising when other runners sidled up to him and inquired about Jim's hair, which was growing out into a distinctly ladylike ponytail; or his fingernails, which were suddenly manicured in colors. Well, he's in a band, Frazier would say airily, you know how rock stars are. Frazier had no idea how many people were buying it; not many, he guessed. He was also not sure what was going to happen in the competitive rankings once Janet Bowman decided to make her debut appearance among the Tamalpas, but the whole prospect interested him enormously. "I assumed that when Janet started running," Frazier says, "she was going to kick ass."

THE PHYSICAL CHANGES that make up "transition," which is what transsexuals call the definitive crossover from one gender to the other, usually take place on two separate tracks. There are surgeries to change the appearance of the body: breast augmentation, facial alterations, hair transplants, genital reconstructions that create functional male or female sex organs. These are costly procedures, generally not covered by insurance, and a person who wants to switch genders—who wants the outside world's label to match what the person feels like inside—may opt for some surgery, or a lot, or none at all.

But anybody who's seriously en route from male to female, or vice versa, takes hormones. Under the most widely accepted standards of care for transsexuals, in fact, a patient is not supposed to undergo genital reconstruction surgery until after an extended period of living publicly as the intended gender while taking hormones. Biological women aiming for masculinity (or FTMs, as in Female to Male) take testosterone.

MTFs, biological men headed the other way, take estrogen, and sometimes progesterone, along with an agent called an

androgen blocker, which curtails the production and effects of testosterone.

It was about 40 years ago that an American endocrinologist named Harry Benjamin published the first extensive studies of transsexuals and the medical protocols for helping them switch gender, and by now there's quite a bit of information about the effects these substances have on the human body. Here's what the available literature had to say, for example, when Janet Bowman set out to see what she might expect from the pills prescribed for her, a combination of estrogen and an androgen blocker called spironolactone: Breast development. Smaller testes and prostate. Finer body hair, and less of it. Reduction of any hereditary male-pattern baldness. Drop in libido. Softer skin. Mood changes. Increased emotional sensitivity. Migration of fat onto the lower abdomen, thighs, and buttocks. She found no information at all, though, about what was likely to happen to a distance runner's endurance and speed. What extra testosterone does to both male and female athletes is common knowledge by now, particularly in light of continuing attention to illicit steroid use. The word "steroid" refers to a group of organic compounds that includes sex hormones, and by the time Janet began her hormones research, doping scandal news stories were regularly describing the effects of pumped-up testosterone: muscle bulk, power, sprint strength, aggressiveness. But losing testosterone, and adding estrogen—not much of a closely studied athletic subject group for that, as it turned out. The famous 1977 lawsuit of René Richards, the tennis player barred from the U.S. Open women's division after her male-to-female transition, ended satisfactorily for Richards but without a great deal of useful information for a person in Janet's situation; a federal court ruled that Richards was legally female and must be allowed to compete, which she did, playing neither memorably well nor memorably poorly, for several more years.

"I thought I'd lose something in my sprint ability," Janet says. "I expected some effect. But actually, I was concerned about being

too good." Reneé Richards spent the remainder of her tennis career saddled with the Transsexual Athlete label, a prospect Janet found dispiriting, but more to the point, Janet was 51 when the hormone therapy began. She knew Jim Furman's over-50 times were good, for a man: under 40 minutes for the 10-K, for example. But a woman running those times in the 50-59 age group would be national class—an immediate threat, in fact, to U.S. masters champion Shirley Matson, who at 64 holds many American records, lives in Marin County, and runs for the Tamalpas. And although there was a certain thrill about the idea of suddenly rocketing into the national rankings, Janet went directly to Matson, who was a friend, for advice. Would it be legitimate to race in the women's divisions, Janet asked, once her transition was complete? Would other running clubs accuse the Tamalpas of harboring cheaters? Should she give up racing? Matson's response was an e-mail so pithy and emphatic that Janet saved it to show around: Of course she should race. And she was going to be a woman. Nothing complicated about that at all. "I just had to applaud her," Matson says. "Fine, there's another woman out there competing, that's the way it goes. I admired her conviction. And doing it at home, in front of all of us. If I were going to do something like that, I'd go to Timbuktu. I would not have had the courage."

Eight months later, October 1998, in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park: Janet Furman Bowman's first registered entry in a formal race. It was a flat 5-K, a distance she had run many times as Jim. Here was the grand entrance George Frazier had been anticipating, and halfway through, Janet was sure she was hammering it. As Jim, she had never run slower than 20 minutes in a 5-K, and now as Janet she kicked hard through the finish and thought, with satisfaction, Nineteen flat. Then she looked at her watch.

"I WAS JUST FLABBERGASTED," SHE SAYS. Janet Bowman's race time, three quarters of a year into the feminizing hormone therapy, was 22:43. Except for some cosmetic facial surgery and

hair transplants, she was still a pre-op, anatomically male transsexual; nothing below the neck had been surgically altered. Her training had diminished as she'd gotten older—around 25 miles a week now, compared to the 40 she had been running a decade earlier—but since January there'd been no real slide. During the weekend trail runs she'd seen that something new was happening, Frazier and the other men making an obvious effort to hold back as Janet pushed hard to try to stay with them, but all runners wax and wane, and nobody had paid particular attention.

So what on earth? Same daily diet. Same leg length. Same narrow hips, long torso, and wiry build; if there had been any "migration of fat," it wasn't visible from a glance at Janet Bowman in running shorts. Same heart, literally, and, as far as Janet could tell from inside her own morphing self, metaphorically as well. Janet wanted to run just as ardently as Jim had wanted to run—as far, as often, as fast. It was true that Janet wept at movies, something Jim had never done in his life, and it was true that Janet's estrogen-stimulated chest was as tender and sore as a 12-year-old girl's. The proposition that there might be some actual linkage between movie-weeping and breast development and speed, that the very process of turning into a woman could slow down a fast racer, sounds like something cooked up to start a bar fight among runners. But that 22:43 race was the fastest 5-K Janet was ever going to run. "Now I look back," she says, sounding wistful, "and that was the last time I broke 23."

At one point, before the hormones, the future Janet had been so worried about obliterating the competition that she called the Indianapolis headquarters of USA Track & Field, anonymously, to ask about the policy on transsexual runners. She was told there was no blanket policy, which was true at the time; since 1991 the organization has maintained a Transgender Task Force, convened after the complaint of a female racer who was irritated about being beaten on occasion by one transsexual

woman in her region. That complaint was eventually resolved by a finding that the transsexual was legally a woman and could continue racing as one. Longtime task force member C. Harmon Brown, a San Francisco-area endocrinologist, says since then the group has been asked perhaps once a year to advise on similar situations. It was just this past February that USATF's national board finally approved the approach adopted last year by the International Olympic Committee: Athletic competition, the Olympic guidelines say, should be open to any transsexual whose genital reconstruction surgery has been completed, whose legal status has been changed (driver's license and so on), and whose hormonal therapy has been underway "for a sufficient length of time to minimize gender-related advantages."

The gender-to-performance linkage, in other words, is real. What happened to Janet should come as no surprise to anybody who understands what sex hormones do, Brown says; among their many other tasks inside the body, estrogen stimulates the storage of body fat, and testosterone stimulates both the building of muscle and the production of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to the lungs and muscles, and so increases endurance. For any athlete who requires endurance, along with muscle strength and speed, being hormonally female appears to be a genuine biological handicap. "Even though she looks the same, and maybe weighs the same, the composition is not likely to be the same," Brown says. "You lose muscle, so you're losing power, and you're gaining fat, which you have to carry around. And you're carrying a male skeleton." Bigger than a female skeleton, that is, and heavier to haul up the trail—but with internal chemistry suddenly inadequate to the task. Says Georgia State University exercise physiologist David Martin, who also serves on the USATF task force: "The transgender athlete probably has a disadvantage, rather than an advantage."

YES, JANET SAYS, THE TRADEOFF WAS worth it. If anyone had explained in advance that this might happen—had warned Jim Furman exactly what he was preparing to lose—it would

have made no difference, Janet says: "Nothing was going to stop me."

She means the transition, but she might as well be talking about running, too. There were multiple surgeries, before Janet was finished turning Jim's body into that of a recognizable woman, and each time the recuperation period was over, she returned immediately to running, which for 20 years had been Jim's solace and anchor through difficult times, and without question would be Janet's as well. The fact that running is also simultaneously now the source of her greatest disappointment—that she will never again run stride for stride with the head-bopper men—is simply a complication she's learning to accept. "I can't keep up with all my friends on my Sunday-morning runs," Janet says. "It's the one regret I have."

She keeps track of her PRs now in two columns, one for Jim and one for Janet. She recently turned 58, and the Janet times are not shabby for a woman in her age group—a 6:55 mile, a 48:07 10-K. In fact, Janet has studied the World Association of Veteran Athletes age grading tables—the standards that calibrate athletic performance according to gender and age—and when she compared her recent race times to Jim's race times, she found something interesting. As a man, advancing through the age ranks, Jim fit in steadily around the 75 percent level—not national class for men of his age, but quite a bit faster than local class. As a woman, working now off a different set of statistical tables, Janet still hits around 75 percent, even as the active competition in her class dwindles. "And as it turns out, I'm quite content to get a medal, or a plaque, that says I was first or second in my age group in a local race," Janet says. "I hardly ever got any hardware when I was a man."

Janet's voice takes a moment's getting used to; masculine timbre is one of the things female hormones don't change, and she had to practice at the muted, slightly breathy contralto with which she now answers the phone. She lives in the same hillside house

she bought as Jim, although it's been redone, skylights and rich colors and a new sunroom that looks out toward the running trails. She has a partner who lives there with her, a woman she met through an online dating service. The business has been sold, leaving Janet in a comfortable semiretirement that she fills with running, race organization, business consulting, and her beloved rock band, which used to have a dark-haired bass player named Jim and now in his place has a blond bass player with hazel eyes and great legs. She still throws the black-tie New Year's Eve party, which she hosted this last time wearing a pink silk scarf over a spaghetti-strap little black dress; the guest list was pretty much the same as always, and included her son, Matt, who is now a 22-year-old university student with one parent he calls Mom and one parent he calls Janet. Matt is a psychology major. One of his courses, last fall, used a textbook called *Sex Differences: Developmental and Evolutionary Strategies*.

"Honestly, in a strange way, it's brought us closer," Matt says. He was 15 when Jim told him what was coming; until that point, Matt says, his long-distance relationship with his father had been careful, awkward, and somewhat formal. "So this was like a big hammer into the ice," Matt says. "We started talking about something *important*."

Which is not to suggest that it was easy, either for Matt or for the adults who loved Jim Furman. Janet's widowed 90-year-old mother, who lives in a residential facility in New York, can't bring herself to explain to her fellow residents her relationship to the athletic-looking woman who sometimes comes to visit. ("I just can't do it. I'm not brave enough. I say: 'This is a friend from California.'") Janet's sister, who is also a widow, says she sometimes finds herself mourning her father, her husband, and her brother. Heidi McGuire, reminiscing one day last winter, was asked at one point what exactly she thought had become of Jim, who vanished without dying in the conventional sense, and the

stricken look on McGuire's face made it clear that she suddenly wanted to weep.

"Huh," she said. "Well. Jim is just...somewhere else. Jim is another time." Then her eyes brimmed. "I've learned to...I care about Janet," McGuire said. "I have a lot of fun with Janet. I love Janet a lot. But I *miss* Jim."

Heidi and Janet run together now, every Thursday morning, on the Tamalpais trails. They'll go four or five miles, at a relaxed nine-minute pace; at least once a week Janet still makes a point of pushing herself, in a race or the group weekend runs, and this spring she began adding on hills and coached track workouts to train for the 2005 Dipsea. By St. Patrick's Day she was in particularly fine spirits, having just edged out three of her strongest local rivals in a tough five-mile race—"I got about two-thirds of the way through and thought, *Wow, I am ahead of these people, what am I doing here?*"—and she was weighing possibilities for upcoming weekends: a 12-K race, in which the Tamalpas wanted Janet to round out the senior women's team; or George Frazier's annual pre-Dipsea training run, which leads a big klatch of serious runners up and down one steep, wildflower-filled Marin County mountainside, seven miles each way for the ones who go all the way to the summit.

"I used to go to the summit," Janet says. Before, she means. When she was Jim.

And as Janet? "Once," she says. "But all the people who got to the summit got there ahead of me. By the time I got there, everybody had left.

Since then, Janet has run the curtailed option instead, ensuring the steady company of others with similar pace and mileage targets. "The short version is eight miles, and that is plenty," she says. She thought for a while about whether Jim would have felt the same way—choosing companionship on the trail, that is,

over the lonely achievement of an arbitrary distance goal—finally she says that yes, she is pretty sure he would. "I've always been in this for the social benefits," she says. "I'd rather run with people than say, 'I went to the summit, and came back alone.'"

Cynthia Gorney is a California-based freelance writer and a professor at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. This is her first story for Runner's World.

Dan Winters is a photographer who has studios in Los Angeles and in Austin, Texas. His work also appeared in the April 2004 issue of Runner's World.

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